

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Hanson, May
Interviewed by
Patricia Young
March 21, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: MAY HANSON

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

DATE: 21 March 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Mrs. May Hanson at her home on Via Del *Cielo* in Thunderbird Villas in Rancho Mirage. The date is March 22, 1980, Friday, at a quarter of eleven in the morning.

I think we'll have to start off by talking about how you first happened to come to Palm Desert area.

MH: Well, my daughter and I, my daughter graduated from college. Her father had given her a new car. So we were meeting him in various and sundry places across the country. And we ended up in, we stayed in Los Angeles at the Biltmore. A friend of ours, the doctor greeting in Washington, D.C. was Edgar Hoover's personal physician. So he'd made arrangements for us. And we got tired of Los Angeles, so we decided to come, my daughter said, could we go to Palm Springs. She'd never

been there, and I hadn't either. So we came to Palm Springs. Well, there were not too many places open in Palm Springs at that time. It was in February. And we found, I can't think of the name of it now, a nice motel in Palm Springs. She wanted to have a swimming pool, so we hunted for a swimming pool. And this man, a Mr. Lemke, was from Cleveland, Ohio, which was where my daughter was born. So this was very nice. So we stayed there for several days. And, you know, Palm Springs at that time was not the nicest place in the world. Anyway, we, I mustn't make the mistake that some of these other people have made about talking about people. I asked him if there was someplace we could go that would give us a little different impression. And he said, oh, go down to Palm Desert and ask for Edith Ward. And go to the Shadow Mountain Club. So we did, and Edith Ward wasn't around. So we, they looked us over and decided we could go in. And they were having a swim meet there. Cliff Henderson at that time did an excellent job about promoting Palm Desert. And we had a beautiful buffet and so forth and so on. It was on a Sunday. And it got kind of late. We decided we were going down to San Diego. And it was very stormy up in

the mountains, so we thought we wouldn't go up that way. We would stay here. Sun and Shadow is about the only place we could stay. So we stayed at Sun and Shadow. The next day Edith Ward came along and said, why don't you let me show you around? And I said, what is there to show? (laughter) Well, she took us around and conned me into buying a commercial lot on El Paseo. At that time, of course, there was nothing on El Paseo. So I called my husband and said, put some money in my bank. I'm going to buy a lot in Palm Desert. Well, where is that? And I said, well, it's near Palm Springs. (laughter) What is there there? And I said, nothing. Yes, there were cut sailor houses. I think there were twenty-five houses on the south side of Palm, of 111. And one of them belonged to, oh, you know the man that laughs, that they called the House That Laughs Built, you know who I mean. Well, they were very pleasant, very nice. And they were good friends of Edith's, so we went along. And then I asked Edgar Bergen, whom I had met, what he thought of development here. And he, of course, was very nice. They had some of the Sun and, not Sun and Shadow, but the, you know that group that Cliff had, where they're building all the, Shadow . . .

PY: Shadow Cliff Colony?

MH: Well, it wasn't the Shadow Cliff Colony. It was well before that. It was where that Blue Nun place is.

PY: Oh, Firecliff.

MH: Firecliff Lodges, yes. And he had a few of those in there. Well, I went back east, we went back by way of San Diego and New Orleans and what have you, went back east. And my husband said, he had to come out to San Francisco, and he said, we're going to San Francisco. And I said, you're going to San Francisco. I'm staying home. But he convinced me I'd better go to San Francisco. And we had some friends that had moved nearby and they decided they would drive us down to Palm Springs. They had never been there. So we drove to Palm Springs. We found one motel open. This was in September, and you know it was pretty warm month. No air conditioning, just desert coolers. No paved road in Cathedral City. That was a dirt road. And my husband looked at me and he said, I really think *you belong in Dicksmont* where are you taking me? And I said, Palm Desert. Well, we came down to Palm Desert and he sort of liked it, too. The snow was on the mountains, you know, very beautiful. So before we left, he bought a house half completed that

Bud Mhoon was building. Well, we incidentally never lived in that house, but anyway, we went into kind of a business with Bud Mhoon for awhile. And incidentally, is he still alive?

PY: Yes.

MH: Is he? I haven't seen him in a long time.

PY: What year was this?

MH: Well, this was in forty-eight. And so Cliff was away, and a Mr. Oh was managing. And Edith talked him into selling us that corner lot where the patio shops are. And Cliff was furious when he got back. But anyway, we bought that lot and then we started to build. We built this one unit for Edith and then went on from there. Then, believe it or not, we rented those shops at that time, six hundred square feet for forty-five dollars a month. And we had a hard time getting it. (chuckle) So we had those until, I sold those, oh, about five years ago, I guess. Maybe six years. But gradually we worked it up so we were getting a hundred and thirty dollars a month. So then, of course, Ed Mullens was one of our big renters. He had that one whole corner, both. Charlie, well, his partner at that time, opened the shops first. My daughter and I even went in there and stacked

the shelves so they could be opened on time. Jean Bellow who was Jean Harlow's mother was one of our tenants. The Bell Telephone Company was one of our tenants. All because this was the only place there, you see. We built section by section. Incidentally, the section that just sold to the city of Palm Desert that they tore down for parking, they got more for that than I got for the whole complex. That's how things have gone in Palm Desert. Well, then we built, after that we traded some lots with Ed Wilcom and built what was the shopping center. That was the second building. And Rings, Stanley Ring, designed that; he was the architect. And he got the prize for the best little shopping center in southern California at that time.

PY: Yes. What center are you talking about, the Market Basket one?

MH: No, that's where Joanie's is. That unit. You know, we called it Palm Desert Shopping Center. And we called the other the patio shops. We never put our name on it, on either of the buildings. Well, that's where we went from there. But in the meantime, as I said, I had talked, when we opened the patio shops, Candy Bergen was just a little girl. And Cliff Henderson had this great big

dalmatian. I guess a dalmatian, yes. Called, oh, I've forgotten the name of it. Had a purity name. Anyway, she cut the ribbon for the opening of the shops. And Christine Mottley, I don't know whether you ran into her, she was one of our tenants, too. She baked all the cookies, made all the little sandwiches. And Sand Ho's in Palm Springs loaned me, didn't charge me, for the . . .

PY: Punch bowl?

MH: Punch bowl and all the cups and what have you. And we had little napkin centers. And the people were very nice then, they were very friendly. There weren't that many around. And, you know, everybody helped everyone else. So that was the beginning of Palm Desert really. The other building that was there was Randall Henderson's building. And incidentally, Randall was the one who really started Palm Desert. This is off the record. (chuckle) So that, then from then on, I came out every year, or my husband used to commute a couple of times a year for maybe every other month or so; while I stayed out here the building was going on. And then after he retired, we would come out and spend four months, five months. We had, we bought, well, we built several houses with Bud Mhoon. And then we bought several houses down

Bermuda Dunes from, well, I thought of his name a minute ago, but anyway, and we moved into one because one of our tenants was a decorator. And we thought that maybe those houses would sell more quickly if we furnished them. Well, one was furnished and one wasn't, and we decided we'd live in the one that didn't sell quickly. (chuckle) So we lived down there for quite a number of years. And right across from one of our actresses, one of our great prominent actresses' mother, she lived right across the street from us there. And Jean Harlow, Jean Bellow and I became friendly. She was one of our tenants. She had an antique shop in the patio shops. And, well, my husband died and here I am. (laughter) He died a month before we sold the house in Bermuda Dunes. And we were going to build at El Dorado, which we, of course, didn't do then. Which I didn't do. And I ended up here, and I've been here for ten years, twelve years. But I still go back to Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is my legal address. Can I give you a pretty good story?

PY: Yes. I just want to fill in some details.

MH: Yes.

PY: You were talking, and when you said, when you came in

forty-eight the first time with your daughter that there were only a few stores around. Could you mention again what was in them?

MH: The only stores that were here were temporary buildings that Cliff had built scattered around on where is now Market Basket. He had three or four stores in there. I've forgotten exactly what was in there. I had some of those folders, but again I think I've given them all to, because we had the little folders. I went down to, I tried to solicit some of the businesses in Palm Springs. I went to some of them in Los Angeles because, you know, to try to get shops built. But, oh, we eventually had them all rented and very well. And Air, Land, Sea at John Kennedy and Fay Bent Kennebeck had one of the, well, the, is it Redmond, Red, they're still down here. They had a furniture store. We built one larger unit for them. And then that was eventually taken by Fay Kennebeck and John Kennedy. And he gradually took, he developed that Air, Land, Sea business to a great extent. She, Mrs. Kennebeck, got out, but he stayed in there until he sold it. And that's the building they've torn down now.

PY: You built that building for them.

MH: Oh, yes. Well, I didn't build it for them. It was, we had built it. Then the barber, Vince he was our tenant for, oh, twenty years, I guess. And the drugstore, Ed Mullens was there for seventeen or eighteen years. And then we had the Standard Oil Company was there on the corner and they were there for seventeen years. Most of our tenants were there for quite a long time. We didn't have too many changes because we kept our rents reasonable.

PY: Forty-five dollars? Yes, that was reasonable.

MH: Oh, well, they went up a little bit from that. (chuckle) But that was the way we started out. And then you'd be surprised, we had a certified letter arrived from some of the tenants saying the rent was too high at that time. But there were very few houses here. You know, there wasn't too much business down here.

PY: What was on the Palm Village side at that point?

MH: There was a five and ten-cent, there was one building, the five and ten-cent store was in one side of it. And, oh, I can't think of the gentleman's name, an older man, who had kind of a handy shop over there. He actually built the motel. But Bill Lingo, Mrs. Lingo, had the Biltmore, and then she had Del Lingo, she built that

Del Lingo Lodge. I don't guess it's even there anymore. It was back in one of the back streets. And those were the only shops here. Ours and those. And then after we built the, had the Desert Enterprises, or the shopping center, then, what's the name of the actor that died? There on Joshua Tree. Edith Ward was living on Joshua Tree and he built a house next to it. And then he built that building in there for Ralph Hale in between. And then Ralph sold that and somebody else bought it. And then he eventually moved to El Paseo. But there was nothing on El Paseo. There was one shop, fix-it shop, on El Paseo, a horrible-looking building. Then, of course, they eventually tore that, and that was it.

PY: That was.

MH: That was it. And all the other things came along afterwards. But I'll never forget my husband's expression, what in the world are you doing down here? (laughter) But long before that, we had been to, well, it's now Scottsdale. At that time it wasn't called Scottsdale. He was on a business trip and I liked the desert. And so when we got home, he said, what do you want for Christmas? And I said, I want an acre of that desert in Phoenix. And he said, what do you want that for? And

I said, well, I don't know. I think if we had that, we'll go back, and if we don't we never will. Well, we kept that for thirty-off years before we sold it. And it was halfway between Camelback and Wrigley's, which became, well, I guess it was Scottsdale then. But it was way, way out in the country, you know. Central Avenue was the only street in Scottsdale then. See, we had to have some more money and squandered it.

(laughter) Well, it's interesting.

PY: Oh, that it is, that it is. You, I know, are very involved in when you were around with Shadow Mountain Club and

MH: Yes, we were charter members. Shadow Mountain Club started out as a very nice place, but it degenerated, of course, terrifically and they've taken all the nice features out of it. It really started out as a very lovely, you know, club. And they were very discriminating about whom they took in, which at that time was probably all right. But it didn't help the situation much.

PY: What do you mean it didn't help the situation?

MH: Well, they were trying to be too exclusive, you know, and that's the reason I think that they have not progressed as much as some of these other clubs have. I won't

mention why, but you can guess.

PY: Do you think that that had something to do with the fact that it didn't really grow, I mean the town itself didn't grow until much later?

MH: Yes. Yes, Cliff Henderson was pretty much the lord of the manor and he was dictating about who could and could not and what have you and so forth. And, you know, he was selling. At one time we, among others, see Mr. Firestone and Edgar Bergen and quite a number of other people, had invested in Palm Desert per se at the beginning. Well, they finally decided they wanted to get some of their money out, I guess. And they called a meeting, there were twenty of us that went to this meeting to try to convince them to buy all of Palm Desert.

PY: You mean including Palm Village?

MH: No, just Palm Desert. No, Palm Village had nothing to do with that. But there was little differences, couple of hundred thousand dollars that they didn't want to give and people didn't want to buy. So we passed it up and then Allison bought it. And really made a big thing out of it, you know. And that's when it began really to progress. But Shadow Mountain then went, became a

stock proposition. And Al Stephenson, a Mr. Stephenson, was president at that time. And we had bought some stock and that didn't work out. And then, oh, it went from one thing to another. A Mr. Kite then had something to do with it, and you know. But then they were trying to hold it to their particular religion and, you know, there were many setbacks before Palm Desert really took off. And now it's taken off too quickly. I think, what are they going to do with all those stores down there? I can't, I'm glad I'm out. I'm happy. I wouldn't want to be, and yet they're getting about a thousand dollars rent for some of those shops. Eight hundred and fifty dollars. Isn't that something?

PY: A dollar fifteen a square foot.

MH: How can they possibly make it?

PY: I think the market will bear that.

MH: Do you?

PY: Actually. Yes. That seems to be the going rate.

MH: Oh, I don't know.

PY: I have not heard very much about this whole situation with Ahmanson. Can you talk a little bit further about that?

MH: I've had a lot of correspondence with this back east

that Mr. Hanson had with *Mr. Ahmanson* He was trying to get a, he was president of the community association at that time, Mr. Hanson was, and he was trying to get Home Savings to give five acres for a park. Well, somebody threw a monkey wrench in that, and that didn't materialize. And now, of course, they eventually had to buy a piece down on the other side. But he wanted it over on the south side, you know, in a nice location. And, of course, the Community Church at that time was down here. And Dr. Baker was the minister. And he built it up. Of course, originally when we first came out here, when Bobby and I first came out here, Dr. McCartney was the minister and they didn't have a church. They had an outdoor services. And Dr. McCartney, strangely enough, was one of five brothers who all were ministers. And one of the most prominent ones was our minister in Pittsburgh at the First Presbyterian Church. So, of course, we had a nice relationship there. But then Dr. Baker really did put that on the market. And there were many of us who were very much opposed to the church being moved up on 74 because we felt that with the nucleus of the church, which is now Sect Center, if they had taken, closed off that road and taken that motel

that was back in there, it could have been very nice instead of moving up the hill here because they paid, oh, they paid five thousand dollars an acre which at that time was, you know, poof.

PY: What year were you talking about, sixties?

MH: Oh, maybe about sixty-two, I think. Somewhere along in there. It was after Mr. Hanson, no, it was, no, it must have been later than that because, well, I don't remember exactly the date that the church

But they had Mr. Beck did the stonework which was lovely on that old church, the little church. And you could look out right into the mountains, you know, the big glass windows. It was very nice. It was, well, Palm Desert at that time was a very friendly place. You knew everyone, you know. Now you walk down the street, you don't know anyone. You don't even see a familiar face.

PY: That's true.

MH: Yes. Even after thirty years. (chuckle)

PY: When you were talking about this meeting in which later Mr. Ahmanson bought a lot of property, what part of the south side was in question that they weren't willing to invest another couple hundred thousand dollars in?

MH: It was a matter of they had that money in the bank and

they didn't want to, the original group didn't want to, release it. Cliff didn't want to release it. They were willing to pay a million dollars for it, but not with the million. They wanted that money back which they didn't want to give. So the whole thing fell through. But I've forgotten what Ahmanson paid for it. But he paid a good deal. But he got all the vacant property that wasn't owned. In Palm Desert there was a good bit of it.

PY: So it was the original property of the bankers.

MH: Yes. Even the property on the other side of 74, which was used for at that time. We had, I had bought a little adobe on the wrong side of the tracks, so called, on the other side of Portola, you know. You lived over there, you were beyond the pale. But it was just right for me when I was here alone. And that was Unit 2. Unit 1 was the center of the town where the businesses were. But, see, we built those two buildings and then built a *It's on the tip of my tongue* and I can't think of . . . And then Kite built those other groups up to San Luis Rey. And the rest of it, of course, was still all vacant. And nothing on El Paseo. Those were the original shops there. We had to go to Indio to do our marketing. Well, no, they

had that little, they had a small market over there where the people from *SEATTLE* She's still the . . .

PY: Dorothy Andrews.

MH: Yes, Andrews. Had, and they wanted us to build over on this side, and we weren't very sympathetic toward building a market, you know. This wasn't what we wanted. We wanted things that didn't require so much attention and so forth and so on. He was down, they built that afterward. He was down further about where the, oh, I can't think of his name either. Down where they have that takeout, you know.

PY: Henny Penny?

MH: What? No, no. On the other side of the road.

PY: Oh, on the north side.

MH: North side. Well, they have that, well, it's a buffet more or less, sort of a delicatessen, they take out and so forth. And incidentally, that man who owned that at the time, we used to have a lot of picnics up on the hill. And Mr. Hanson and I bought the piece of property. Oh, they used to have, I've forgotten all about our Palm Desert Players. They used to hold down on the north side, oh, what was his name, the actor? He used to put on his plays and had little workshops with benches,

wooden benches, there and they put on . . .

PY: Clay Sterns.

MH: What?

PY: Clay Sterns?

MH: Clay Sterns used to put on little plays there. And then he finally sold that, or something happened, and then they would put on some of the plays in one of our vacant shops. And they put them on down in Randall Henderson's building for awhile. Then we bought or paid the down deposit I should say on a piece of property up off 74. And then finally paid it off, Mr. Hanson and I. They made a few payments. Then they built what is now a recreation center, but that was the playhouse. And Walter Stern and Mr. Hanson and Walter Markley were the ones that were putting up the money. And Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Lee Thompson. Know her as well as I know myself and I can't think of her name.

PY: Leila?

MH: Leila Thompson, that's right, Leila Thompson was the president. And Mr. Hanson used to talk about Leila and said she could spend money faster than anybody could make it. Leila and I were very good friends. And we used to have a lot of fun. They'd put on dinners before

the play, you know. And that's another picture I have of some of the people going in there in dress clothes. Those were the early days of Palm Desert which were very interesting.

PY: Why did that all change do you think?

MH: I beg your pardon?

PY: When do you feel that that feeling of the early days, what did that start changing?

MH: When they started to build all these condominiums.

PY: 1960s?

MH: Well, later than that. Mr. Hanson died in sixty-eight and Palm Desert was still not too grownup by that time, you know. They were building houses here and there, but nothing, nothing like it is now. So it must have been about sixty, it was still, we still knew practically everybody in Palm Desert in sixty-six and sixty-seven. It started, it's only been the last, I would say, ten years that it's gone as it has now. And, of course, you know El Paseo has only been the last, what, three or four years.

PY: Where precisely are the patio shops on El Paseo?

MH: Well, corner of Larkspur and the Frontage Road. The green buildings, the old ones there.

PY: Like on 111.

MH: Yes. 111.

PY: I just wanted

MH: We didn't have a frontage road then.

PY: Actually what I meant to ask you was what happened to your lot on El Paseo? Did you ever build on that?

MH: No, I sold it a couple of years ago. It was still vacant. No, they haven't built and I'm surprised. A lot of propositions have built up. Ed Mullens was very generous before he moved in that new building. Said he would pay me twenty-eight cents a foot if I'd build for him. (chuckle) Because he had very cheap rent all the way along. But, you know, we were satisfied. We didn't do too badly. What do you want?

PY: Oh, some attention.

MH: What do you want? What do you want? Well, you can go to sleep. When he wants to, he doesn't like what he's being eaten, so he sticks his tongue out at me. When he wants to go out, he sits at the door. When he wants to be held, he meows.

PY: Well, at least he's got a code. (chuckle)

MH: Yes.

PY: Anything else that you can think of that you feel is . . .

MH: Well, no, not really. The playhouse was one of the big things. He wants out. The playhouse was, the Palm Desert Players was *I still have some of that* stationary around, I think. And, of course, Pat Anderson could tell you an awful lot about, and Anne Carpenter. They had, that was who was in the other little section of that building down there. Where the five and ten was, the Carpenters, Anne and Hal, her husband, had that little furniture store. It was so crowded that when you went in to buy something, you had to move everything out on the street so you could find what you wanted inside. Anne can tell you a lot about that. And then after her husband died, she built that where the Chinese restaurant is now. And Faye Bowie was here. She was doing still what she's doing now. And, of course, the Wards, Margaret and Sonny and Edith.

PY: Well, that was interesting. You were talking a little bit about why you first, you built the first section for her.

MH: For Edith. Well, as I said, she and Cliff had a falling out. (laughter) See, Edith used to sell all the property down here. And she and Cliff had a falling out. She was operating out of her house, and he said unless she got a building, an office to work out of, she'd have to

get out. So we built that. She stopped in Pittsburgh to see us and we built that first little one for her. And we copied a building. We had an architect here. He's now in Colorado Springs. White his name was, planned the buildings for us and they were so expensive no builder would ^{put} estimate on them. They said we'd have to be ~~cross~~ ^{plussed} Well, you just can't build commercial buildings that way. So we built the little building in Cathedral City, and she said that would do fine with six hundred square feet. So we borrowed the plans from that man down there and built the first unit. And then built the, like it. And those buildings have been up there for a long time now. And they've still, if they painted them they'd still be all right. You know, they've really stood up. But they built them better then than they do now.

PY: Very true.

MH: But that's the reason that we did that. Edith, as I say, conned Mr. Ahl into selling that corner. And Cliff was furious about it. He wasn't very happy. That was his best corner. That really was the best corner in Palm Desert at that time. And Standard Oil went in, and we waited a long time before we let them go in there. And

then they finally wanted us to tear down buildings. But they weren't willing to pay the price. They weren't willing to pay what we were getting rent out of the other buildings. And so we said no, and so they moved down, when they started building that Pines to Palms they moved down there. But the most we ever got from Standard was five hundred dollars a month. So, you know.

PY: Was there any trouble selling the spec houses that you had been building with Bud Mhoon?

MH: No. No. We built one up on Ironwood. Built one above there. I've forgotten the name. Just above there. I think we built three with Bud. Then we bought the two down in Bermuda Dunes. That's as far as we ever went with the spec houses. But at that time those houses were selling for twenty-nine thousand five hundred dollars.

PY: Is this the fifties?

MH: Yes.

PY: Those were great prices now.

MH: Oh. You know, actually it just amazes me. I was looking at some of these condominiums. You can't even look at one for under a hundred and twenty-five thousand, a hundred and fifty and above. It's just what's happened

here. I keep saying, I see it but I don't believe it. You know, it's just fantastic what's happened here in thirty years or less. Ten years really. Because even ten years ago you could buy a house for thirty-five, forty thousand dollars. Somebody said a hundred thousand dollars, you just looked at them and thought, well, you've lost your mind. (laughter)

PY: Was there any story behind the House That Laughs Built?

MH: Lillian, what's her name, Lillian, she was the wife of a mainstay. No, I don't really know except that she said that, she told me one time that it was because of his, you know, acting and so forth that they were able to build that house. They bought that property, I think that property sold for five thousand dollars, the vacant land up there because I thought about buying some. And my husband said, no way, you know. But, and then they had, she had a trailer there that she used for guests and then the house and a little guest house. And he was, of course, he wasn't here very much, but she lived here all the time. She lives up in Visalia, whatever you call it now. Near her daughter. And, of course, Marea married Van Leer or the older daughter. Of course, you know about that. I don't know whether she's living

now, but she's . . . oh, Susie Cowling lived here at that time. She was Susie, she married Sam Cowling. I was up to see her in Hemet yesterday. She's still living, and she taught jewelry making to adult classes in Palm Springs at the high school. And made beautiful jewelry. I have some of her jewelry that she made, and it's exquisite. She lived in a little adobe on Chickery, I think it was. And then she was very friendly with the House That Laughs Built. I'm trying to think of the name, of his name.

PY: Johnson?

MH: What?

PY: Johnson.

MH: Johnson and, no, no, but whatever. And they built her a little house up on, not Fairway Drive, wasn't that far up. A street this side where the church is now. And she lived there for a long time. It was so vacant. But when I was in my little adobe, we could wave towels at each other to messages through a smoke screen. If she wanted me to come up there, she'd wave a towel. If I wanted something, I'd wave a towel or something down there. There was nothing in between. And Susie and

Anne Carpenter, of course, are still very good friends. They were then. And as we are. When you stop to think about thirty years is a long time, isn't it? It's a lifetime really. I can't think of, it was Lillian, Lillian, Lillian, isn't that funny. Lillian Johnson, no. Olson and Johnson. That's what it was. Lillian Olson. And theirs was the first house up there on not grapevine, it's not that far up. What's the name of it? Well. That was there. And they were way out in the sticks so called, you know. And a Mrs. Value lived. Then when, who was the man that had the Catalina swimsuits? Stewart, Stewart. Then he bought that forty acres which is now Marrakech, which was called Haystack Ranch at that time. And she sold that after he died. And that's where they have all the Marrakech complex now.

PY: You say she, you mean . . .

MH: Mrs. Stewart.

PY: Mrs. Stewart.

MH: Yes.

PY: Did they actually run it as a ranch? Haystack Ranch.

MH: No, it was just bought for, you know, enhancement of value. He was one of the original investors in Palm

Desert with Cliff Henderson. Then these names escape me. The man who I think he died not too long ago that had the shop across the road on the north side that sold all the things for, you know, cups and

PY: Gift ware?

MH: What?

PY: Gift ware.

MH: Well, it wasn't exactly gift ware. They were the, what they give the athletes.

PY: Trophies.

MH: Trophies, yes.

PY: Oh.

MH: She had that shop over there.

PY: The Old Brush?

MH: No, he's down on a side street. This was Mary's Sales, and he had a little shop right on the north side of 111, where he had all these trophies and things. I think he died recently. Or did he? She died I know, but I don't know whether he did. Whether he died just recently.

Would you like a cup of coffee?

PY: No, but . . .

MH: Any questions you want to ask I'll try to answer.

PY: I've noticed since I've been around the valley now for

about four years.

MH: You're not related to Evelyn then?

PY: No, not at all.

MH: She was one of our tenants, too.

PY: Oh, really.

MH: Yes. She's down there in the building, I think. Yes.

PY: She has a small office there?

MH: Yes.

PY: I've noticed since I've been in the valley that there's a real distinction between the cove communities and the Rancho Mirage is not Palm Desert.

MH: Oh, no.

PY: Or Indian Wells.

MH: No.

PY: So that there had to be a sense of strong sense of community still existing. Do you know how it's changed or what direction it's taken?

MH: I don't quite understand.

PY: Well, you and others talk about the past as being a time when everyone knew one another and that the community was there in a real sense because everyone was sort of helping everyone else out and they were growing and they were concerned about what was going to happen to Palm

Desert. And I think also Indian Wells the same way.

I mean people were concerned about what was going to happen to the area in which they lived and they were, there was some concern.

MH: Well, I think there was a definite feeling. We were very much opposed to Palm Desert incorporating at that time. Mr. Hanson fought it very hard, among others. And because the feeling was that we weren't ready for incorporation at that time, that it was going to increase taxes and whathave you. Rancho Mirage didn't want to go in with Palm Desert. As a matter of fact, the people that were running Palm Desert at that time were only realtors. And there was a very great feeling against them, you know, that they were only doing this for their own benefit. Indian Wells didn't want to go in. Of course, there was nothing in Indian Wells at that time either. El Dorado finally built there. Indian Wells club which is still privately owned by Kersey, is it? The oldest.

PY: Yes, John Kersey.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2:

MH: inspiration with Palm Desert and that's the reason you have all these three communities and Cathedral City all completely out. Cathedral City at that time was called part of Palm Springs as was Palm Desert. We were never designated as Palm Desert, even the first classic. I've worked for the classics for twenty years, ever since they started. But they were always designated as Palm Springs. Thunderbird, when I first came down here, was a ranch because I took my daughter down there, my older daughter, one time for dinner. And it was, we sat near Rosalind Russell, which gave her a big thrill. And that was just kind of a little ranch place with a few little rooms, you know. And then what's the one below Thunderbird?

PY: Tamarisk?

MH: No. No, no.

PY: Oh.

MH: It's not a club. It's still a ranch. It was . . .

PY: White Sun?

MH: White Sun. That was there. And that, of course, was not anywhere near the size it is now. We used to go down there for barbecues and things. A man from Palm

Springs, the Irishman, what's his name? That he used to put on those barbecues down there, married a Japanese gal. He's not doing it, of course. I don't think he's even alive now. We used to have nice barbecues down there, big thick steaks for three or four dollars, you know. And it was really a fun place then. But now it's changed completely.

PY: What was this ranch that's where Thunderbird is now?
Do you remember very much about it?

MH: Thunderbird Ranch.

PY: Oh.

MH: I'm sure that's what it was called, yes. And at that time we could have bought a membership in Thunderbird. When they started the club, we could have bought a membership. You're restless, Blackie, what's the matter? We could have bought a membership and a lot for five thousand dollars. What's the initiation now, twenty-five thousand?

PY: Something like that.

MH: Yes. Yes, times have changed a little bit.

PY: Can you tell me a bit about the classics? You say you've been with it twenty years.

MH: Well, what do you want to know about the classics?

PY: Were you in on the beginning of it, the first Desert Classic?

MH: At that time we were living at Bermuda Dunes, you see. And so, of course, we were involved in the working of it. And I think at that time I used to score and Mr. Hanson was what do they call them, well, whatever it is. I scored for quite a number of years. I scored for most of the big players at that time. Arnie Palmer and those people. Incidentally, I had some property just above his golf course in Pennsylvania which I just sold. But then when we moved from Bermuda Dunes, or even before, I worked as a chauffeur at El Dorado, you know, driving the contestants around. That's . . .

PY: How has it changed, the Classic? I mean, it must be quite different than twenty years ago.

MH: Well, there's a lot more contestants than they used to have. There's a lot keener competition. I can remember scoring for Rudolph Mason one time and they were offering twenty-five thousand dollars for a hole in one and he stood on that one tee and he said, I'm not proud. I'll take half. (laughter) It was quite different. The brothers played, and a lot of those oldtimers are not

entering into competition anymore. Arnold Palmer certainly should get up. I don't know how he got involved in Ironwood up there. He's very involved in that, I guess.

PY: Has the organization of the Classic changed at all?
In other words, how it's presented.

MH: I don't think so. Except the fees have gone up considerably. (chuckle) And I still drive a car for the Classic. I've gotten to the point where I don't think I should score anymore because I have a little problem with my eye. It gets a little tiresome, too, you know. And I'm sort of afraid of the responsibility because you remember several years back, probably before you came, that one of the scorers made an error and the contestant didn't notice. And he signed it and he was disqualified. And I think that would be a dreadful feeling. So I thought I'd better not score anymore. Get out while the getting's good. And I don't think that we have as many requests anymore for drivers as we used to have because most of them drive themselves now. Once in awhile they want to be taken to another club, but . . . And, of course, we don't drive wives, just the contestants.

PY: You used to drive the wives?

MH: Well, occasionally we'd make it, but not anymore.

PY: So you feel it's more of a business now than it was in the past?

MH: Yes. Big business. Big business, yes.

PY: Generally, Yancey hasn't always been in charge of it. Who, has he?

MH: Oh, no. He's only been . . . they change every few years. He's only been in a few years. I don't know just how long, but.

PY: Who's been the most closely affiliated with it throughout the years?

MH: Well, Ernie Dunlevie of Bermuda Dunes has been in since the beginning. And, of course, Bob Hope almost . . . It first was called the Palm Springs Classic. And then, I don't know just how Bob Hope got involved in it, but it was several years before he was involved. I think John Kersey has been in since the beginning. And, of course, Tamarisk and El Dorado alternate and of course, La Quinta isn't that old. But Dunlevie has been active ever since it started.

PY: I'll try and get to them. I guess the only other thing I wanted to ask you was getting back to this idea of

community. Do you feel there's still a sense of community in Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage? You know, it's just not like what it used to be.

MH: No. I don't think so. I think it's, well, maybe I shouldn't say that. But so many of the older, the oldtimers so called have gone. I mean they've passed away. Now take the Palm Desert Garden Club or the Garden Club of Palm Desert, it's only fifteen years old, which is not very old. I belong to one back east that's sixty years old, you know. And the one in Palm Springs is even newer than that. They are members of the Woman's National Flower and Garden Association. And that in turn is affiliated with the Associated Country Around The World, which is comprised of seventy-six countries and eight and a half million women members. I've been quite active in that. But, no, I don't think, now that group of women of I guess about thirty, thirty-five are fairly well knit. But on the whole, I don't think that you have the feeling. Now I understand that they have several hundred members of Shadow Mountain now. But you see that golf club is not too new, not too old because originally it was just a pitch and putt around the old Shadow Mountain Club. And then they started the

Shadow Mountain Golf Club out of that. And, of course, now they have all those condominiums in there. They don't have that pitch and putt. They gave that up completely. But the whole conception of things. Now when we first moved to Bermuda Dunes, that golf club was part of the area, was owned by the Dunlevie and Ray Ryan at that time. Well, then the members bought it. So this changed the whole conception of things, you know. The whole area has changed completely. And then you have the Jackie Cochran little golf course down there. Now that was a great big golf course with all kinds of condominiums and everything around it. So there's no resemblance really to the original area.

PY: Does that make it bad?

MH: No. No, it doesn't make it bad, but it takes away the friendliness of it. You don't have the same feeling about it, you know. It's a very nice place to live during the winter months. You stay here all year? Do you?

PY: Well, inevitably I seem to be gone some of the, I don't think I've been here an entire summer, but I don't plan it that way.

MH: I've spent almost a whole summer here in the early days.

We didn't have air conditioning; we had desert coolers. And they had a desert cooler on your side of your car. But I didn't mind it then because it was dry. Now with how many golf courses, forty now, it's, the whole, even the atmosphere has changed. And we never used to have any smog down here. And, of course, now we get the smog. And then back in those days they used to burn all the old palm trees and that created quite a lot of dissention because the whole area would be black with the smoke. But now they've stopped that. And, of course, Salton Sea wasn't developed in any way. Used to go down there and get beautiful branches of desert holly. And I'd send them back east to be sold at our market, you know, our garden market. Now you can hardly find a piece of desert holly anywhere. So that that became so commercial. And, of course, they had that when they built that nice little club down there, that Salton Sea, what was it called, Salton Sea. We were members of that for quite awhile. You know they've built little shape of a ship. Now that's commercial. That's no longer a club. I drove some friends down there a couple of weeks ago when they were here. And it's amazing how that's developing. And moving all those citrus down there and

around here we had date groves and grapefruit trees and you were taxed so much a tree. If you had even a dead one or a live one, you paid five dollars a tree tax.

If you had trees on your property. You know, the groves.

PY: City, I mean county tax?

MH: What?

PY: A county tax?

MH: I guess. I guess it was, yes. So if we had a piece that had some dead trees on them, they were furious because they were taxing them for the dead trees until we took them out. But the whole area, well, everything changes. You can't. You drive across the country and you hardly see a little town anymore. They're all growing so much.

PY: That's very true.

MH: Yes. I know people who used to go to Florida, thought it was so nice. And now they're not sure where they want to go.

PY: They used to make desert coolers for the car, I didn't realize that.

MH: Oh, they had those little round things that fit on the window of the car. Well, I don't know whether they were desert coolers. They cooled the car, whatever they were. And then some people hung water bags on, you know, to

give a little condensation. But the air was dry. You perspired but it dried so you were automatically cool. And now, of course, we have so much humidity here much of the time. But we used to have picnics up in Idyllwild and picnics on the way up at Clark's up there. And everybody picnicked. Have you talked to Nina Shumway? Well, Jane Walker, did she tell you about Jane Walker?

PY: No.

MH: Well, Jane Walker was a friend of ours. She lived in Indio and she was the librarian of the Indio Library.

PY: She did tell me.

MH: And we used to go out and dig up concretions and we'd take a can of fruit along for the moisture, you know. And the fruit to eat. And we'd go back down along, well, part of the Salton Sea and back in the hills and dig and pick up pieces of ironwood, you know, and that sort of thing. Driftwood. You know, nobody does that anymore. We'd have picnic off the back of the car. And used to drive along. And that was Christine Markley went up to Hemet with me yesterday. And we were talking about the time when we used to, her husband used to drive us along the canal. You know, the little road there. And we'd drive along the canal. Then we'd stop and have

a picnic or something of that kind. Well, those days are gone forever. I don't think you're even allowed to drive along there now anymore. Then Jean Bellow used to go fishing down the canal. (laughter) How she'd go fishing up in Whitewater.

PY: Well, you can still do that. You have to pay for it, but you can do it.

MH: Yes. Yes, we can still do that. We had a party up there one time, Jean Bellow and I. I think it was the most expensive party I'd ever had up until last time because we had quite a number of guests. And we would ask them because you paid a dollar and a half for your pole or whatever. And then so much for each fish. And we'd say, please don't catch any more than you will eat here because we cooked them right up there, you know. And have potatoes and things. Well, they'd come home with gobs of fish (laughter) which we, of course, had to pay for. So Elizabeth Cameron was alive then, and her husband Don Cameron.

PY: He did a lot to develop Rancho Mirage, didn't he?

MH: Yes, they sold all over the valley pretty much. They do too much. I don't know, they did too much to develop Rancho Mirage. They had that little group of shops there

that they built afterwards. Ralph Deets was in there and the Camerons. We had four shops there, I think.

PY: There were Jergenson's or . . .

MH: No, they didn't do that. No, they were this side of, wasn't it this side or the other side, I've forgotten which, but there was just one little group of shops there. I don't know how much they did to, they were never my favorite people. (chuckle)

PY: Oh. Did you spend much time at Desert Aire or did your husband ever fly in here?

MH: No. There wasn't any airport there then.

PY: In Rancho Mirage?

MH: Well, Desert Aire, yes. That was there. It was Gogerty, yes. No, he never flew in there. He was not a flyer. As a matter of fact, we had very little, even in Palm Springs, then. You had to go into Los Angeles, and I used to drive back and forth to pick him up or he'd take the bus.

PY: Made you feel like you were way out in the middle of nowhere.

MH: That's right. There were no houses. You looked out, and especially at dusk or at night you didn't see a light anywhere. It was just like being out on the ocean

because there were no lights.

PY: Here you mean? Or on the way in.

MH: On the way. On the way. There was a big, and there was no, the only place that you could stop and get anything, I remember one time when Edith drove me down. She said, now we better eat before we leave Los Angeles because there's no place on the way to get anything to eat. And then they built, they called The Outpost. You know where the road goes off to Riverside? Well, in that area there was a little restaurant. I don't know whether they had rooms there or not, but it was called The Outpost. And their food was excellent. But that was a long time afterwards. And so then when I'd go back and forth to Los Angeles, we'd try to make that for dinner because, you know, the planes didn't get in very early those days. Then after that, they built the Rescue Lantern and that was a good place to go. There still aren't too many places around here. Well, there's that one at Redlands. Of course, you bypass that now with the freeway. Used to go to Sage's and get strawberry pie. (chuckle) Wonderful! I don't know whether Sage's is still there anymore. Are they? I don't think they are.

PY: I don't know. I haven't

MH: I don't know either. Now you go on the free . . . as a matter of fact, I haven't even been in Los Angeles for the last couple of years. I get here and I stop.

PY: Because you don't have to?

MH: I don't have to. I'd like to, but, oh, I don't know, you know. Of course, I haven't even been here too much the last couple of years, having been president of Women's National Flower and Garden, I was everywhere else but here. But I still go to London three or four times a year for meetings. So that takes time out. I didn't go this year. I sat. Blackie, what do you want? You're the most restless little thing.

PY: He says, I want that girl out of here. It's interesting, what you're saying is fascinating in the sense that it sounds like L. A. was so far away and really isolated out here.

MH: It sounds like it, but it isn't. It really isn't. I mean now you have the limousines that go into the airport. But they don't stop in Los Angeles.

PY: No.

MH: You go to the airport and that's it, so that you almost have to drive if you want to go into L. A. Well, take

the greyhound bus and that. Who wants to take greyhound bus? Some of my guests do. I don't drive them into Los Angeles.

PY: Did you find that you were driving into L. A. a lot more in the early days?

MH: Oh, yes.

PY:

MH: Oh, yes. You didn't have much, you didn't have this traffic. I used to go in, oh, at least maybe once a month for something or other. I don't know what for, but I used to go in and, but now I don't make an effort to go in at all. I keep thinking I want to, but I don't. I drove, Mrs. Baker lives in Duarte, she lives in a retirement home there and I haven't been up to see her for a couple of years. I do get up to Hemet and see Susie every year. But that's not so far. Traffic is terrific, you know, everywhere now.

PY: Oh, yes. Do you think the whole concept of living here part of the year vacationing in this area has changed from what it used to be?

MH: I think more people are doing it. And yet more people are living here all year round, too. Yes, I think it's changed a great deal. A lot of comedians now, a lot of

comedians come down here now, more than used to, I think. A lot more than used to. Actually this area is for Canada, western Canada, like Florida is for the eastern part of the country. I think, I don't think many people come down here just for a short time, a week or two. I think more people come for longer periods. Don't you find that true?

PY: I don't know. That's why I was asking you if you've noticed a difference.

MH: Well, I think as they call snowbirds down here that, well, I think,, well, of course, the very fact that they're building the way they are is proof that many people are using this as a second home and they come necessarily for, of course, if you stay in California longer than five and a half months or close to six months, you have to pay a California tax. Well, you're not about to do that and pay wherever else you live. So I have spent less time here since Mr. Hanson died than I used to spend. I come out sometimes in November, usually about Thanksgiving, and I go back normally around the first of April. This year I didn't come out until just before Christmas, so I'm staying a few days longer. But when Mr. Hanson was alive, the first snow we had even in vacation is when

we were off, you know, usually, maybe in October or early November. But I find that, well, depends on the weather. I may leave early in April, again depending on the weather because I drive. But I don't know how much longer I want to do that either, drive across country. I've been doing it for a long, long time.

PY: I understand it gets more expensive, too.

MH: Yes. So, yes, yes, because a single room at the Holiday Inn anywhere costs you anywhere from twenty-five to thirty dollars or more. Used to be eighteen.

PY: Yes. Well, I think I've run out of questions for you.

MH: (laughter) I think I've run out of answers, too. I can't think of very much else. As I say, the, I thought the fact that Candy Bergen is so much in evidence now. Well, Edgar Bergen had one of those Sun Lodges and he had the door pulls, all had Charlie Bergen, Charlie McCarthy on, painted on. I thought that was interesting. And . . .

PY: He had another house, though, or ranch here, didn't he?

MH: Well, he had all those Sun Lodges. I don't know what else he had. He had Sun Lodge. But many of the actors had ranches back in La Quinta. And some over on the north side of Indio because the Lovelands used to take

care of those. They had those whirligigs, you know, the frosty nights and so forth and so on. I think, trying to remember who they were because they were some of the well-known actors, the better-known people. I think a lot of them had pretty good, pretty large investments down here.

PY: Who were the Lovelands?

MH: They were real estate people. They're both dead now. They were real estate people in Indio. And they sold a lot of property around here. They're both gone.

PY: Was Lucille Armstrong here in the early days?

MH: Lucille Armstrong was also one of my tenants. She hasn't been here. Well, she went into partnership with Edith Ward for awhile. I don't think she's, that I've known her more than ten or twelve years. She's still down the patio shop. Her daughter was in there for awhile, but I don't know whether she's still there.

PY: One of the questions, I noticed these paintings.

MH: No, my Hiltons are back east.

PY: So you are interested in

MH: Oh, yes. Wilson, this is Leila Wilson. She's got, I have several of hers. That one up above the Chinese

gal, woman, is one of my ^{daughter} painted ^{when she} ~~ones~~ through ^{was in Germany} ~~the~~ journey. She took that from a Christmas postcard.

She, that's a Leila Wilson, that oil down there. And the one above it is Love, I think the Lovelands gave that. My daughter paints a good deal. She's been

This is one of hers here.

(Too far away from microphone for me to make out what is said.)
PY:

MH:

PY: Were you at all familiar with some of these desert artists?

MH: With Leila Wilson, yes. I met some of them, but I wouldn't say I was familiar with them.

PY: Did you have much to do with the gallery in the Desert Magazine building?

MH: No. We bought there once in awhile, but . . .

PY: Oh.

MH: That was Randall Henderson's art. No. I think Henderson still is up on, his wife, up on 74th in the Indian Springs.

PY: Yes, I talked to her. Yes.

MH: I have one of Nina Shumway's books and I have one of Randall Henderson's, excuse me, Randall Henderson's books. But this is, Susie is the most artistic person you can imagine. She paints, she used to do this *painting* *SHE'S EVEN LOOT the sight an* side of the eye, and this is an actual stone and she paints the, she's made plenty of these, I think,

PY: And that's Susie . . .

MH: Susie Callum. She was Susie Keiffer was her name before she married Sam.. And Sam was connected with the former governor of Washington that lives up there on . . .

PY: Waldron?

MH: Waldron. He lives up, you've got all these names He lives up there on, I think it was *Don*, Joshua Tree, one of those streets. And she married Sam. And, but she could do anything. In fact, I'll show you one of her pieces of jewelry.

END OF INTERVIEW